

A

S E R M O N

Preached on the 28th. of June,
A T
S^t G I L E S in the *Fields*,
B Y
John Sharp, D.D.

Arch-Bishop of Y O R K Elect,
At his leaving þ Parish.

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L O N D O N:

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Philip. iv. 8.

Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

I Have the two last Lord's Days, made it my business to treat of this Text, in a way that I thought did most tend to the informing your Judgments: And to that purpose I have raised several Observations, and drawn several Inferences from it.

I mean now to Treat of it in another way, and to apply my self wholly to the pressing you to the Practice of it.

And indeed the Nature of the Sermon I am to make, doth call for this from me. For I am now to take my leave of you; this being the last time in all probability that I shall Preach among you as your Minister: And therefore I suppose good Advice and Exhortation will more become me at this time, than a close Discourse upon a Text.

And yet, my Text doth afford matter enough, without straining it, for such a purpose: Nor indeed do

do I know a Text in the Bible, that I could more willingly pitch upon to leave with you, as the last advice I would give you, and as the Sum and Conclusion of my Preaching among you; than these Words of St. Paul I have now read to you.

Let me therefore at this time address my self to you all, as the Apostle here did at the conclusion of his Epistle to the Philippians, *Finally Brethren whatsoever things are true, &c.*

Here are a great many things recommended by the Apostle to our thoughts and pursuit. If we would make a distribution of them, I believe they will all naturally enough fall under these **Four Heads**. For the things here recommended are not so many as the words by which they are expressit; there being several Words used in this Enumeration, that are of the same importance, and seem to express much the same thing.

The **Four Heads** I would reduce them to are these,

- I. *A Constant Adherence to the true Religion.*
- II. *Honesty and Justice in our Dealings.*
- III. *A Life of strict Purity, in opposition to Sensuality and Lewdness.*

IV. *The Adoring the Doctrine of God we do profess, by the constant Practice of every other thing that is Virtuous or Commendable, or well thought of by Mankind.*

This, as I take it, is a fair account of the Parts of this Text: and these I shall make the Heads of my following Exhortation.

I begin with the first. *Finally my Brethren whatsoever things are true, think on those things.*

The

The *Truths* that S. Paul here exhorts them to think on are undoubtedly the *Truths* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which he had delivered to them. These he would have them to think upon, and persist in, and never to be prevailed upon by any Temptation to depart from them.

Let me now apply this Advice of his to you. It is the particular Blessing of God to this Kingdom, and an inestimable Blessing it is, that he has not only vouchsafed us the Light of his Gospel for many years, but He has also taken Care that the *Truths* of it should be delivered to us with greater Purity and Sincerity, and freer from the mixtures of Error than to most, I was going to say, than to any other People in the World.

If it lay in your way to make observations concerning the State of Religion in other Countreys; nay or but to read the Accounts that are given of it: I am sure you would be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this Church are, above all the other Churches in Christendom.

O therefore let us all firmly adhere to the *Truths* we have been taught; to the *Truths* we have hitherto made Profession of. And let us firmly adhere to that Church which hath held forth these *Truths* to us, and taught us this Profession.

We do not pretend that any Church is Infallible, and therefore not ours: But this we dare say, and we can justify; that if we take our measures concerning the *Truths* of Religion from the Rules of the Holy Scriptures, and the Platform of the Primitive Churches, the

the Church of *England* is undoubtedly both as to Doctrine and Worship, the Purest Church that is at this day in the World; the most Orthodox in Faith, and the freest on the one hand from *Idolatry* and *Superstition*, and on the other hand from *Freakishness* and *Enthusiasm* of any now extant.

Nay I do farther say with great seriousness, and as one that expects to be called to account at the dreadful Tribunal of God for what I now say, if I do not speak in sincerity: That I do in my Conscience believe, that if the Religion of Jesus Christ, as it is deliver'd in the New Testament, be the true Religion (as I am certain it is:) Then the Communion of the Church of *England* is a safe way to Salvation, and the safest of any I know in the World.

And therefore I do exhort you all in the Name of God, stedfastly to hold and to persevere in this Communion.

Here you have the *Things that are true*. Think of them and embrace them heartily; and Live and Die in the Profession of them. This is the Doctrine I have always Taught you, and by the Grace of God I mean to Practise accordingly.

II. The next thing I have to recommend to you from these words of the Apostle is Universal *Honesty* and *Justice* and *Righteousness* in your Conversation. *Whatsoever things* (saith he) *are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just*; think on these things.

You see I join these two words *Honest* and *Just* together, as importing the same thing. Tho yet I am

am aware that the word we here render *Honest* is often used in another signification, that is to say for *Grave* or *Venerable*: But since that other signification falls in most properly under my last Head, I waive it here and take the word as our Translation renders it.]

Indeed it is in vain to expect any advantage from our profession of the *Truth*, if we be not sincerely *Just* and *Honest* in our Actions.

Whosoever can allow himself in the practice of any dishonest, knavish, indirect Dealing, let that Man be never so Orthodox in his Belief and Opinions; yet I am sure he is no true Christian.

Therefore let me exhort you all, whatever Interests you have to serve; whatever Dealings you are ingaged in, to be always strictly *Just* and *Upright* in your Conversation. Use no Tricks, practise no ill Arts for the serving your ends, but in all your transactions with Men, deal with that *Simplicity* and *Integrity* and good *Conscience*, that becomes those who would be accounted the Disciples of Him who was the most *Innocent*, the most *Sincere*, and the least *Intrigueing* Person in the World.

Assure your selves no dishonesty can prosper long. Whatever turns you may serve by it at present, yet you will bitterly repent of it some time or other. But Righteousnes and Justice doth establish a mans ways. And the upright Man, tho he is not always the richest, yet always walketh most surely. And as for the final event of things; Remember this that God Almighty has pronounced that *no Unrighteous men, no Covetous, no Liars, no Extortioners shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. But to go on. B III.

III. The next thing I have to exhort you to from the words of my Text is the Practice of *Purity*. For after the Apostle hath recommended the pursuit of things that are *true*, and the things that are *honest* and *just*, he next adds the things that are *pure*. Meaning hereby that we should strive to be pure and chaste and temperate both in our Hearts and Lives; avoiding all *Excesses*, and *Lewdness*, and *Sensuality*.

And if he thought it convenient in that Age of strictness and severity and devotion, to put the Christians in mind of this: I am sure it is not only convenient but necessary to do it, in this Age of ours; when *Luxury* and *Debauchery*, when *Whoredom* and *Drunkennels*, and all sorts of *Vices* that are contrary to *Purity*, are grown to that height among us, that we seem to defie God Almighty by our impudent Practice of them, and provoke Him to give us up to Destruction.

I pray God make the whole Nation deeply sensible of the *Folly* and *Wickedness*, as well as of the *danger* and *dreadful Consequences* of these Practices. And as for you who are here present, let me bespeak you in the Words of the Apostle; *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* I beseech you as you have any Honor for your Lord and Master, as you have any regard to the preservation of a Sense of Religion in your Minds, as you have any concern for your Health, for your Estates, for your Families; as you have any respect to the Publick, that Effeminacy and Sottishnes and Diseases may not be entailed upon our Posterity; lastly as you love your own Souls

Souls, and hope ever to see the face of God in Heaven, learn to live Soberly, learn to live Charily, learn to practise Purity and Temperance in all your Conversation. Avoid Whoredom and Drunkenness as you would the Plague, for certainly they are the worst of Plagues to them that use them: For other Plagues do only put our Bodies in danger, but these do endanger both our Souls and Bodies. Nay as to the one (I mean our Souls) they will prove certain inevitable Destruction without Repentance and Reformation.

I know these things are made slight Matters of by a great many among us. But assure your selves God will not account them so; it is certain he will not, if we may believe his Word; for it is there told us expressly that *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.* And withal, that *neither Adulterers, nor Fornicators, nor unclean Persons, nor Drunkards shall ever inherite the Kingdom of God or of Christ.*

IV. I proceed to the last Head of Advice that is given in my Text. The Apostle having instanced in *Three* things necessary to be daily thought upon and pursued by all Christians, viz. *Truth and Honesty and Purity*, leaves off to meddle any farther with particulars, and sums up the rest of his Advice in generals. And that sum comes to this, that as we are Christians we should not only take care of the three forementioned things, but should make it our business to improve our selves in every other sort of Virtue; nay in every other sort of thing that is *Praise-worthy*, or that is well esteemed of among Mankind. So that really it should be the endeavor of our Lives to render our selves as excellent and as exemplary for all sorts of amiable

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merit. His holiness to you, for this is a good book, and
mably Qualities as it is possible for men to be in this
World.

This I take to be the full meaning of those four ex-
pressions that follow in my Text, *Whatsoever things
are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be
any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think of these things.*

And now Brethren, see from hence what your Ob-
ligations are. You that have such a glorious Light
vouchsafed you; such unvaluable Promises, such
mighty Assurances made over to you by the Gospel
of Christ; You must in Reason imagine that in return
of these great Advantages, great things are expected
from you.

It will not satisfie your Engagements, that you do
believe and profess the Gospel, that you do no wrong
to your Neighbours, that you are neither given to
Lewdnes nor Drunkennels, (tho yet even these, as
the World goes, are very great things, and could all
Men that profess Christianity truly lay this of them-
selves, we shoule soon see Heaven upon Earth). But
your Christianity obliges you to aspire after greater
things; you must get your selves possessed of the
whole Circle of Virtues; you must be *Kind* and *Char-
itable*, as well as *Just* and *Honest*; you must be *Modest*
and *Meek* and *Humble*, as well as *Temperate* and *Chaste*.

Nay not only so, but you are to labour after all
these several Virtues, in the full Latitude and Extent
of them, even to that degree that every thing which
hath but the *appearance of Evil* is to be avoided by you.
You are not only to abstain from Acts of Injustice,
but even from doing a *bad thing* to any one; you
are not only to keep your selves within the known

Limits of Temperance and Chastity, but to avoid all those things that border upon the Vices opposite thereto, and so as to all other instances; If a thing be of ill Report, and looks infamously to the sober part of Mankind, why that very Consideration is enough to deter you from the Practice of it; For you are to recommend your Religion to all the Men in the World, by all the ways that are possible.

In a Word you are to endeavor to be as free from blame in your whole Conversation as you possibly can, and not only so, but to be as good, and to do as much good as your Circumstances will allow you.

This now is to be a Christian indeed; by thus endeavouring you truly walk worthy of that high and heavenly Calling, wherewith you are called, and you do (as the Apostle advises) *adorn the Doctrine of God in all things*; and happy, extreamly happy are they that do thus, for great is their Reward: Great even in this World in the solid Peace and Assurance of Gods Favor which they here enjoy, and which indeed far exceeds all the Blessings that the Earth can afford; but exceedingly great in the Life to come, when Jesus Christ shall come with all the Powers of Heaven to do Honor to those that have thus here honoured him.

Thus have I gone through all the parts of my Text, but I do not think that I ought so to leave it. I have given you an account of the things that St. Paul hath here directed us to, to be the main pursuit of our Lives. But I think likewise it will be proper to speak something of the Methods of that pursuit, or the means

means which we are to observe, if we would practise this Text ; and here I am to begin anew with my Advices. Several things I have to represent upon this Occasion and to exhort you to. I am not much solicitous, whether they strictly belong to my Argument or no. But I desire to leave them with you, as things that I judge to be very useful, and which I wish may be ever remembred by you.

And the *First* thing I would exhort you to is this, *That you would endeavour to posseſs your Minds with a hearty Sense of God Almighty, and the absolute Necessity of being seriously Religious.*

I do not mention this, as if I thought there was any need to caution you against *Atheism* or *Infidelity*, for I hope not many among us are inclined that way. Mankind are naturally disposed to believe a God and Religion, and since through God's Blessing it is *Christianity* that is the Religion of our Country, and in which we have been all Educated : I look upon an *Atheist* or an *Infidel* among us, to be a sort of *Prodigy*, a strange unusual Creature, vastly different from those of his own Kind.

But here is the thing. Though most of us profess Religion and the true Religion, yet many of us have no lively or hearty Sense of it. We use Religion as we do our Cloths. They are very convenient, nay perhaps necessary, and therefore we wear them, and for the particular form or mode of them we follow, as to that, the Custom of the Countrey where we live. Yet as the Cloths we wear do not alter the Complexion or Features of our Body, so neither doth the

the Religion we Profess any more affect the Temper of our Souls. We serve our selves in both Cases of the outward Conveniencies that are to be had by them, but we are still the same to our Persons both as outward and inward Lineaments.

But alas this is a very sorry way of being Religious and will do us no great kindness. We may perhaps reap some secular advantages by it, but yet even the very trouble and pains it puts us to, do equal the Conveniencies we have from it. The Men that live thus, are just served like those that work in rich Mines. They are daily imploied about Gold and Silver or Gems, and they work hard, and they have their days wages for their Labour, but they are not a whit the richer for the Treasures that come into their hands.

Your Religion will never serve you to any extraordinary purposes, till your Hearts be affected with it as well as your Understandings. Let me therefore advise you, as you love either your Happiness in this World, or in the next, make it your principal care to get a lively and vigorous Sense of God impressed upon your Minds. And look upon it as the greatest Interest you have to carry on, the greatest Business you have to do in this World (as it really is) to approve your selves to this God by a sincere endeavour in all your Conversation, to walk as his Son Jesus Christ hath taught you. If you do this, you will certainly find the Sweet and Comfort of it both here and hereafter.

When all is said, it is a vain thing for any man to expect a tolerable easie passage through this World, unless he have the Hopes of Gods Favour to support him under the Multitude of evil Accidents which the State of Humane Life will necessarily expose him to. And as for the other World, without these Hopes he is perfectly lost: And to be able to entertain any rational Hopes of God's Blessing and Favour, is

a very vain thing likewise, unless we make it our busines with our whole Hearts and Souls to serve and please and obey Him.

There are a great many Rules and Maxims that we use to give to our Friends or our Children for the making their Fortunes, and I cannot deny but they are exceeding good ones. Thus for instance, we advise them to get a true understanding of their Busines, and to pursue it diligently, to keep out of ill Company, to avoid Drinking or Gaming and Lewdness, and to study the Tempers and Humors of Mankind, and to learn to apply themselves dexterously to those they have occasion to converse with; why these and such others are excellent Rules and most worthy of all Men to be studied and practised. But still there is one Rule above all these, and without which all the other will signify very little to the making a Mans Life easie and comfortable; and that is to preserve a lively sense of God upon our Spirits, to have his Fear always before our Eyes, to love him above all things, to value his Favor more than Life, and to dread his Displeasure as the worst of Evils. If we can but once get our Souls into this frame, we have done our Busines both for this World and for Eternity; All the other particular Rules and Advices will be in a great measure superfluous; for he that is possessed of this good Principle will of course naturally fall into the practice of them. And besides this Fear and Love of God in our Hearts, as it is the most effectual means, according to the usual Disposition of the Divine Providence, to put us into good Circumstances of Living; so it is the only means of making our Circumstances happy to us, if they be good; or of making them easie and supportable, if they be bad.

I do

I do therefore most earnestly recommend it to you, as you desire that either you or yours may prosper, nay, as you would not be very miserable; be not contented with a superficial outside Religion, but affect your minds as deeply as is possible with a sense of God, and what you owe to him; and endeavour to impress the same sense upon your Friends and Children, and all that are about you. The truth of it is, so much doth our present happiness, as well as our future, depend upon this belief of God, and love to him, and hopes of his favour; that were it not for this, the present World with all the imaginary pleasures and glories of it would appear to all wise and good men, not only an empty dull unsatisfactory place, but a dismal melancholy prison. If it was suppos'd that all things here were the effects of blind Chance, or fatal Necessity, and that there were no Wisdom and Goodness that did preside over the World, or took care of Mankind; no considering man could desire to live here,

The Second thing I would leave with you, is this, That after you have got into your minds a hearty sense of God and his Providence, and his presence and goodness; so as that you mean to make it the business of your lives to recommend your selves to him: you would in the next place, take care to keep up that sense by a constant and daily Worship of him.

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For

For God's sake, and for your own sake,
do not neglect your Prayers. You must never
think that God will bless you, if you do not
make a Conscience of daily paying him your
tribute of Honour and Worship.

Be sure therefore, you be constant in your
private Devotions. As you every day receive the
renewed pledges of God's love and goodness to-
wards you in a thousand instances, so let every
day your affection and gratitude be express'd to
him, by hearty Prayer and Thanksgiving. This
is absolutely necessary to be done, as I have
often told you, if you mean to preserve any
hearty sense of Religion in your minds.

But besides this I have another thing to re-
commend to all those that have Families. They
are Heads and Governors of a Society. For in-
deed the first notion of Society is that of a Fa-
mily. Every Family is a little Kingdom, and
every Kingdom is or ought to be a great Fa-
mily. Now is it natural, is it decent, that there
should be any Society upon earth wherein God
should not be owned and worshipped? And yet
woe be to us, how many thousands of Families
are there in this Kingdom, nay, I am afraid,
even in and about this City, wherein God is
not so much as named in publick, unless per-
haps by the way of affront, by the way of Curs-
ing or Swearing.

We

We deservedly complain of the great looseness and profaneness and irreligion that hath overspread the face of this Nation. O! I doubt a great deal of the blame of it lies upon the Householders, the Masters of Families among us: if they would take better care of their Children and Servants, and let them know what it is to worship God, things would not be so bad among us. But how can we expect better, when there is no Religion either taught or practised in our houses. We give our domesticks opportunities enough of learning all our bad qualities; but we give them none of learning our good ones, if we have any. bed is in the old man in 1553

They see us offending God by many rash words and sinful actions; but they do not see us repenting and asking God's pardon by our solemn Prayers and applications to the Throne of Grace. Let us therefore seriously lay this point to heart: on I am sure we have just cause to do it. Let us bring Religion into our Families, and not be contented that once a week some of our people in their turns should hear something of it. Let us every day call our family together, and pay our common tribute of Prayer and Praise for the mercies we do daily receive in common. Methinks our Saviour seemed to have a respect to this very duty, and to charge it mightily upon us, when he made us that gracious promise

mise that even, where two or three were gathered together in his name, there would be in the midst of them. Sure, his words have most naturally a respect to the worship of God that is perform'd in Families. As hath likewise the very contrivance of the Lord's Prayer: all the Petitions thereof being so framed, as to be most proper to be said by more than one, and yet too when we have shut our doors for that purpose. But,

Thirdly, As you ought to take care about the worship of God in your Closets and in your Families; let me add, that it equally concerns you to frequent the more publick worship of God in his own house. It is a bad sign of some very ill Principle or other, for any man to be much a stranger there. Even to have the liberty and opportunity of worshipping God in publick, is one of the greatest blessings and privileges that we can have in this World; and hath by good men always been so accounted. Now sure, if we have this Notion of it, we shall think our selves mightily concerned to take all opportunities that come in our way, not only on Sundays, but on other days, of resorting to the publick Assemblies, and joyning with them in the solemn sacrifice of Prayer and Thanksgiving; and thinking it a good day to us wherein we have thus employed our selves, or God The Sacrifices of this kind that we offer to God

God with an honest and devout mind, we can-
not doubt will always find acceptance, and pro-
duce their effects; nay, perhaps when our Clo-
set-prayers will not. For there are certainly
more promises to *publick* prayers than to *private*
ones. Tho' yet both are very good, nay both
are absolutely necessary. But to proceed,

Fourthly, Being upon this Argument of the
means and instruments of Religion, you may be
sure I cannot omit the mentioning of another
thing, as one of those points that I would most
seriously recommend to you, and that is the so-
lemn observation of the Lord's Day.

I am not for laying stress upon the keeping of
this day, or any other, more than the nature of
the thing requires. I am sensible that the do-
ctrine about the observation of the Sabbath, as
it is delivered by some Men, is superstitious e-
nough, and oftentimes, where it is believed, proves
rather a snare to mens Consciences, than of use
to make them more Religious. Far therefore
am I from desiring you to be nice and scrupu-
lous about the *Punctilio's* of the Lord's day ser-
vice. The Laws both of God and men have in
that matter left a great deal to your own dis-
cretion, and the circumstances you are in. But
however thus much is necessary, that every man
who professeth himself a Christian should bear
a constant Religious regard to the Lord's Day,
by

by devoting it to spiritual uses, more especially the publick worship of God.

I do not much doubt of the truth of the observation which some good men have made, viz. That a man shall prosper much better both in his Spiritual and Temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful observance of the Lord's day. And I am likewise of opinion that those men have little or no sense of Religion, that make no conscience of sanctifying that day, or that put no difference between it and other days. Sure I am, were there nothing of a divine command for the setting apart this day to Religious uses (which yet I believe there is); yet it is one of the most prudent and useful Constitutions that ever was made. So that even upon that account, all men that have any honour for God, or zeal for the publick good, should think themselves obliged to observe it.

The benefits of it are indeed unspeakable. Not to mention the Civil or Temporal conveniences of it; in truth to the keeping up the Religion of this day we owe in a great measure that the very Face of Christianity hath hitherto been preserved among us. And were it not for this, for any thing I know, most of us in a very few years would become little better than Heathens & Barbarians. And so great an influence towards the making men better, or at least keeping them from grow-

growing worse, hath this practice always had; that you may observe the most profligate men among us, who for their wickedness come to an untimely end, do generally impute their falling into those sins which caused their death, to their breaking the Sabbath, as they commonly express it. But, as we said before, *Fourthly*,

Fifthly, Let me upon this occasion put you in mind of another thing, which by many of us is too much neglected. And that is, the taking all opportunities of coming to the holy Sacrament.

I have often spoken to you about this matter, and I now desire to remind you of it. There are little hopes you will ever make any great progress in virtue and holiness, till you can bring yourselves to a frequent and constant participation in this holy Mystery. Because indeed this is the solemn Ordinance that Christ hath appointed for the conveying his grace to us, and enabling us to overcome our sins, and grow daily in virtue and goodness.

I know we have generally many and inveterate prejudices as to this matter. But assure yourselves they are mere prejudices and no good reasons. Every man that means and designs honestly, and endeavours to lead his life as a Christian ought to do, may certainly with as little scruple come every Month to the Communion,

as

as he may come every Week to say his Prayers or hear a Sermon. Nay, and I say further, if a man do not so lead his life, that he may approach to the Sacrament every Month, nay every Week, nay every Day, if there be occasion; I am afraid that he doth not live so, as to be fit for it, tho' he comes but once in a year, or once in seven years. For the duenes of your preparation doth not depend upon your setting aside so many extraordinary days for the forcing your selves into a Religious posture of mind, but upon the plain natural frame and temper of your souls, as they constantly stand inclined to virtue and goodness. A man that seriously indeavours to live honestly and religiously may come to the Sacrament at an hours warning, and be a worthy Receiver. On the other side, a man that lives a careless or a sensual life may set apart a whole Week or a whole Month, for the exercising Repentance, and preparing himself for the Communion, and yet not be so worthy a Receiver as the other. And yet he may be a worthy Receiver too, provided he be really honest and sincere in the matter he goes about; and provided that he remember his vows afterward, and do not sink again into his former state of carelessness and sensuality.

But to return to my point, I do verily think that most of the doubts and fears and scruples that

that are commonly entertained among us about receiving the Sacrament, are without ground or reason; and that every well disposed person that hath no other design in that action but to do his duty to God, and to express his belief and hopes in Jesus Christ, and his thankfulness to God for him, may as safely at any time come to the Lord's table, as he may come to Church to say his prayers. And if the case be so (as I believe it is) then of what a mighty privilege and benefit do they deprive themselves, who when they have so many opportunities, do so seldom joyn in that solemn Institution of our Lord, which (as, I said) was design'd for no other purpose, but to be the means of our growing in grace and virtue, in love to God and to all the World.

O therefore my Brethren, let me beg of you not to be strangers at the Lord's Table. But I need not beg it of you, for I am sure you will not, whensoever it shall please God to put it into your hearts seriously to mind the concerns of your Souls, and to be heartily sensible of the need you stand in of the grace of Christ for the leading a holy and pure life.

I have but one thing more in the *Sixth* place, to leave with you, and I have done. It is not indeed of the nature of those things I have last recommended to you, that is, a means or instrument of growing more virtuous: but it is a

principal virtue it self. And I do therefore recommend it to you, because it is at all times useful, at all times seasonable, but more especially it seems to be so now: And that is, that you would walk in Love, and study Peace and Unity, and live in all dutiful subjection to those whom God hath set over you, and endeavour in your several stations to promote the publick Happiness and Tranquillity as much as is possible: But by no means upon any pretence whatsoever to disturb the publick Peace, or to be any way concerned with them that do; by no means ever to ingage in any party or faction, and least of all any faction in Religion, which is grounded upon a State-point.

I am sorry the posture of things among us gives me occasion to mention this matter; but it is too visible to what a height our animosities and discontents are grown, and what the consequences of them may be, unless there be a timely stop put to them, I tremble to think.

With mens differences as to their notions about the Politicks I am not concern'd; let men frame what *Hypotheses* they please about Government, tho' I do not like them, yet I do not think myself bound to Preach against them. But when these differences are come to that pass, that they threaten both the Civil and Ecclesiastical Peace; there I think no Minister should be silent.

Church-

Church-divisions God knows we have, and have always had too many, but it is very grievous that those who have always declared themselves the friends of our Church and enemies to Schism, should at this time of day, set their helping hand to promote a Separation.

And yet it seems to this height are our differences come. Some people among us that formerly were very zealous for the established worship of the Church, are now all of a sudden so distasted with it, that they make a scruple of being present at our Service. Nay, some have proceeded so far as to declare, I know not upon what grounds, open war against us, and set up Separate Congregations in opposition to the Publick.

What is the meaning of this? hath *Schism* and *Separation* from the established Worship, which heretofore was branded as so hainous a sin (and deservedly too,) so changed its nature all of a sudden, that it is become not only innocent but a duty?

Have we not the same Government both in Church and State that we formerly had? Have we not the same Articles and Doctrines of Religion publickly owned and professed and taught, without the least alteration? Have we not the same Liturgy, the same Offices and Prayers used every day that have always been? What is there

there then to ground a separation upon?

Yes, But the names in the Prayers are changed, and we cannot pray for those that are now in Authority, as we could for those that were heretofore.

But how unreasonable is this, when S. Paul has bid us to put up prayers and supplications and intercessions for all men, especially for Kings and all that are in Authority. Doth he make any restriction, any distinction what Kings, or what persons in Authority we are to pray for, and what not? Doth he not expressly say, we must pray for all men, and for all that are in authority? And doth not the reason of his exhortation imply as much, if his words did not? Namely, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty?

But I pray consider what this Doctrine leads to. If this principle be admitted to be good Divinity, then farewell all the obligations to Ecclesiastical Communion among Christians. For what Government is there in the World that will not meet with such Subjects as are not satisfied with it? and if that dissatisfaction be a just reason to break Communion with the Established Church, what Ligaments have we to tie Christians together? What will become of holding the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace? What is the consequence of this, but endless Schisms and Separations?

But

But farther, I wish those Persons would consider what an unaccountable humour it is to make a Rent and Schism in the Church, upon a mere point of State.

Great Revolutions have happen'd in all Ages and in all Countries, and we have frequent instances of them in Story. But I believe it will not be easily found that ever any Christians separated from the Church upon account of them. Still they kept unanimously to their Doctrine and their Worship, and never concerned themselves farther in the Turns of State (how great soever they were) than peaceably to submit to the Powers in being, and heartily to pray to God so to prosper their Government, and direct all their affairs, that all their Subjects might lead quiet and peaceable lives under them in all Godliness and Honesty. But when in a Revolution, a Prince was advanced to the Throne, that they looked upon to be a good man, and an encourager of the True Religion; in that case they did not only readily submit to him, but acknowledged it as the great blessing of God to them, that he had raised up such a Man to rule over them. This was the Notion, and this was the Practice of the Primitive Christians as to this matter, I may indeed say of the Christians in all Ages. And whatever you may have heard to the contrary, I doubt not to say that this is the

the very Doctrine of the Church of *England*.

Let me therefore exhort all of you to be followers of Peace; to promote publick Unity and Concord as much as is possible; to study to be quiet and mind your own business; to be more concerned for your Country and Nation than the Interest of any single man in it; heartily to submit to the Government; and not only so, but to thank God for the Blessings you enjoy under it, and most earnestly to pray for the Continuance of them. Lastly, never to espouse any party or faction against the Government, nor ever to be driven away from the Communion of the Church, of which you have always professed your selves members, by any of the pretences which some warm men may suggest to you. This I dare venture to say, how uneasie soever some of you now may be in joyning with our prayers, you will at last be ten times more uneasie in separating from us. For Faction has no bounds, and God knows whither it will lead a man at last. Were there nothing else but the Heat and Turbulency, the Passion and Peevishness, the bitter Zeal and Uncharitableness that the being of a Party doth naturally ingage men in; I say, were there nothing else but this, No man that consults the peace of his own mind, would for any consideration leave the publick Communion, and espouse the cause of a separate Interest.

Interest. But there are worse Consequences than these, and I pray God we may never feel them.

And now I have done with my Exhortation. I have spoke my thoughts very freely to you. And I hope you will receive what I have said with the same kindness that I meant it. And truly I have no reason to doubt of it, after so long an experience as I have had of your Civility and Candor. Indeed during all the time I have been among you (which hath been now near Sixteen years) I have been so kindly treated by you, and have received so many Testimonies of your Good-will, that I cannot but take this Opportunity of publickly acknowledging my Obligations to you, and returning you my Solemn Thanks for Them.

I cannot indeed say that I have done my duty as I ought, and I heartily beg of God to forgive all my defects. But I have this satisfaction, that I have sincerely endeavoured in all my Preaching, to instruct you in the true doctrine of the Gospel, and to teach you the right way that leads to Salvation. And I am so certain, that I have not been mistaken my self, nor mis-led you in that matter; that I dare with Confidence address my self to you in some of the words of the Apostle, which do immediately follow after my Text: *Viz. Those things which you*

you have learned and received and heard from me,
do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

and I shall ever bless God for that Providence of his which placed me among you; and as I shall always, and do, earnestly desire all your prayers for me; so I shall always heartily pray for you. That God would guide and prosper you, that his good Providence would always watch over you for Good; that he would bestow upon you and your Children after you all sorts of Blessings needful and convenient for you; and especially that he would deliver you from every evil work, and preserve you to his Heavenly Kingdom. This God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

F I N I S.